Emergency Medical Services’ Perceptions of the Roles and Responsibilities of Athletic Trainers on the Athletic Field.

Diakogeorgiou, E, Cotter, JC, Jusino, DL, Clines, SH: Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, CT.

Context: Miscommunication between Athletic Trainers (ATs) and responding Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and can exacerbate life threatening situations endangering the lives of those being cared for. By gaining an understanding of what EMS’ perceptions are ATs will be well prepared and able to educate local EMS personnel - ultimately providing better care during emergency situations on the athletic field. Objective: To gain a better understanding of how EMS perceives the abilities of an AT and what they feel an AT can and cannot do on the field in an emergency situation. Design: Open Ended Survey Setting: Online Patients or Other Participants: One hundred fifteen participants. ATs were excluded. Training levels: EMR (n=2), EMT-Basic (n=28), EMT-Advanced (n=25), and EMT-Paramedic (n=60). Years of experience: 49% of respondents had over 20 years of experience, 34% had 10 – 20, 17% had 10 years or less. Data Collection and Analysis: An online survey system was utilized. The survey was divided into two sections; a demographic questionnaire and open-ended questions regarding EMS’ perceptions of ATs. Interview questions were designed in consultation with a qualitative research expert to ensure accuracy of questions, flow, and to eliminate potential bias. Peer review was done by 12-15 ATs, and was piloted twice by the same group of 10 EMS to ensure test-retest reliability. The general inductive approach was utilized for data analysis to uncover the most dominant themes from the data. In order for a theme to be established, 50% of the participants needed to fall within a code. Data credibility was maintained using multiple analyst triangulation and peer review. The response rate was 48.3%. Results: Of 238 surveys opened, 118 surveys were completed and 115 survey responses were analyzed after exclusion criteria. Emerging themes included: (1) EMS’ sound understanding of AT but lack of knowledge regarding the emergency care domain, (2) protocols are a guiding factor in how EMS responds to and handles situations on the field and (3) experiences with ATs guide trust of the profession. Responses concerning knowledge of AT included: fifty respondents (43%) had an accurate understanding of the profession, 36 respondents (31%) showed a general understanding, and 35% of respondents stated ATs only possess basic CPR training. Fifty percent reported positive interactions with ATs while 20% reported negative experiences. Overwhelming responses were received whereas EMS responded that once EMS is activated EMS protocols take precedence regardless of the AT’s training. Conclusions: ATs and EMS work closely in many instances, most importantly during an on field emergency. A better mutual understanding of both professions is warranted. Additionally, the creation of similar protocols may also enhance professionalism and communication between the two professions. Word Count: 440 words